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Mary Cownie, Director
Chris Kramer, Deputy Director

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DCA invests \$1.3 million in six communities to spur cultural development

Des Moines' Sixth Avenue Corridor, Grinnell, Linn County, Manning, Waukee's Raccoon River Valley Trail and Hamilton-Webster Counties receive grants

DES MOINES – The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) continues to build and sustain a more culturally vibrant Iowa by awarding more than \$1.3 million for projects in six communities designated Iowa Great Places.

DCA approved an Iowa Great Places Citizen Advisory Board recommendation to designate and award funding to the following five communities as Iowa's newest Great Places: Sixth Avenue Corridor (Des Moines), Grinnell, Linn County, Manning and the Raccoon River Valley Trail (Waukee). Hamilton-Webster Counties was named an Iowa Great Place in 2010 and received additional funding for a new project during this most recent grant round.

This year, the board reviewed applications from nearly a dozen Iowa communities requesting approximately \$3 million. Common themes identified across the communities awarded funding include an emphasis on creating livable, walkable communities, revitalizing downtowns and urban neighborhoods, and capitalizing on outdoor recreational corridors.

"The Department of Cultural Affairs is committed to empowering Iowa to build and sustain culturally vibrant communities," DCA Director Mary Cownie said. "These communities awarded funding recognize their own unique sense of place and we are proud to invest in projects that foster economic growth and enhance the cultural identity of Iowa."

"These awards represent a diverse group of hard working Iowans who recognize the value of capitalizing on their most authentic community assets," said Nick Glew of Marion, chair of the Iowa Great Places Citizen Advisory Board. "The board was truly impressed by the local and regional collaborations these project demonstrate and the private sector investment they are leveraging."

The Iowa Great Places program challenges Iowans to create community development proposals that exemplify bold thought and innovation; encourage creativity and entrepreneurship; foster a sense of place and identity; and demonstrate a commitment to enhancing community vitality and quality of life. Proposals are submitted to and reviewed by the 12-person Iowa Great Places Citizen Advisory Board, which looks for the following criteria in making its recommendations:

- a guiding vision plan and interrelated set of strategies
- broad-based support for projects that include multiple local and regional partners and public-private partnerships
- strong organizational capacity demonstrated by financial and programmatic performance and service to constituents

The list of new Iowa Great Places announced today and projects receiving funding follows. Information about the presentation of the Iowa Great Places designations and funding will be announced as it is confirmed.

2015 Great Place Designee: Linn County

Applicant: Indian Creek Nature Center

Grant Award: \$400,000

- **Project**
Amazing Space
- **Project description**
Iowa Great Places funding will support a major expansion of the Indian Creek Nature Center into a new environmental education and recreation center called Amazing Space. When completed, the project will seek to become Iowa's first facility (and one of only a handful internationally) to achieve Living Building status, the highest designation for environmental sustainability. The project, sited on 300 acres in the City of Cedar Rapids and Linn County, is integral to the Cedar Wapsi Recreational Byway Vision, a strategy developed by Linn County to invest in its outdoor recreational resources in a way that will maximize benefit to residents and visitors to the region. When implemented, the Byway, which features 23 identified sites, will help protect the natural resources in the area, provide a range of recreational experiences, and foster economic development by promoting regional tourism and improving the value of nearby properties.
- **Comment**
"This designation as an Iowa Great Place will be a catalyst to achieve the community's vision for expanded outdoor recreation opportunities within Iowa's Creative Corridor. As the first project for the Cedar-Wapsi Recreational Byway, Indian Creek Nature Center will expand our commitment to the outdoors and connect people with nature through the Amazing Space project." – John Myers
- **Contacts**
Brent Oleson, Linn County Board of Supervisors, 319-892-5000
John Myers, Executive Director, Indian Creek Nature Center, 319-362-0664

2015 Great Place Designee: Sixth Avenue Corridor, Des Moines

Applicant: City of Des Moines

Grant Award: \$250,000 challenge grant

- **Project(s)**
Sixth Avenue Corridor Streetscaping and Public Art, Phase 1
- **Project Description**
The City of Des Moines has committed to improving upon and creating culturally vibrant corridors and neighborhoods through a mix of infrastructure investments, placemaking streetscape projects, and revitalization programs. To that end, Iowa Great Places funding will assist the City of Des Moines in the first phase of a placemaking streetscape project to transform the 6th Avenue Corridor into a vibrant, safe and pedestrian-friendly destination. Located near the historic River Bend and Cheatom Park neighborhoods, the area is ethnically and culturally diverse and historically rich with more than a dozen buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. The vision for this project builds upon these assets and calls for the return of the 6th Avenue corridor as a community destination – a vibrant, eclectic neighborhood and source of pride for local residents and an endpoint for visitors.
- **Comment**
"The City of Des Moines is excited to have the 6th Avenue Corridor designated as an Iowa Great Place. The challenge grant award from the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs for the 6th Avenue Streetscape Project is an important piece in reaching our funding goals to make the project a reality. This project has brought together a host of partners at the local, regional, state, and federal levels and once implemented will serve as a model neighborhood revitalization catalyst project." – Kyle Larson
- **Contacts**
Kyle Larson, Senior City Planner, City of Des Moines, 515-283-4164
Laura Peters, Director, Sixth Avenue Corridor, 515-314-4243

2015 Great Place Designee: Grinnell

Applicant: City of Grinnell

Grant Award: \$200,000

- **Projects**

Central Park Improvements and Downtown Entrance Enhancements

- **Project description**

Support from Iowa Great Places coincides with significant local and private reinvestment in Grinnell's historic downtown core, which according to city leaders will amount to more than \$30 million over three years. Iowa Great Places funding will specifically support improvements and expand amenities in Central Park to increase the park's function as the community's social and cultural hub. Additionally, long-sought downtown entrance enhancements will serve to reinforce Grinnell's identity as a "Jewel of the Prairie" – a motto derived from Louis Sullivan's 'Jewel-Box' Merchants National Bank, a key community attraction – and direct visitors off Highway 146 to a main corridor into downtown. These projects coincide with plans to develop a 64,000-square-foot event center and boutique hotel in what was formerly the city's community center; repairs to 16 historic facades; the historic rehabilitation of the Spaulding Manufacturing property into 80 loft apartments; rehabilitation of the Veterans Memorial Building at Central Park; and a major investment by Grinnell College to improve the zone of confluence between Grinnell College's campus and downtown.

- **Comment**

"The city of Grinnell is pleased to be recognized as one of Iowa's many Great Places. The designation will serve as a catalyst to the improvements to both Central Park and entrance enhancements to our downtown. These improvements will greatly enhance the work that has already been completed to our downtown strengthening this area as the social, cultural, and economic center of Grinnell." – Grinnell Mayor Gordon R. Canfield

- **Contact**

Russ Behrens, City Manager, City of Grinnell, 641-236-2600

Great Place Designee: Racoon River Valley Trail (RRVT)

Applicant: City of Waukee

Grant Award: \$200,000

- **Project**

Racoon River Valley Trail (RRVT) Public Art & Cultural Corridor Initiative

- **Project description**

Iowa Great Places funding will support a regional vision to enhance and promote this popular trail through the development of a unifying public art theme that reflects the history and culture of the region. The plan is embraced by 14 communities and three counties located along the 89-mile trail, which accommodates more than 150,000 visitors annually. Significant public art structures and cultural amenities will be installed within the trail system, beginning with a signature trailhead design in Waukee, envisioned by RDG Dahlquist Art Studio of Des Moines. The RRVT system is owned and operated by Dallas, Guthrie and Greene Counties, in partnership with the 14 trail communities, which include Waukee, Adel, Redfield, Linden, Panora, Yale, Herndon, Cooper, Jefferson, Jamaica, Dawson, Perry, Minburn, and Dallas Center.

- **Comment**

"On behalf of the City of Waukee, our Project Team and all the Trail Communities we thank you and the Great Places Program for this significant award. The completion of this project along with the Iowa Great Places designation will certainly yield significant cultural, recreational, health and economic benefits for the region and statewide – now and well into the future." – Randy Jensen, RRVT Committee

- **Contacts**

Matt Jermier, Director, City of Waukee Parks and Recreation, 515-978-0007

Jim Miller, Chair, Racoon River Valley Trail committee, 515-224-5516

Great Place Designee: Manning

Applicant: City of Manning

Grant Award: \$150,000

- **Project**
Trails, Public Art, Milwaukee Trestle Park
- **Project description**
Iowa Great Places funding will advance the vision of Manning, a rural community of 1,500 near Carroll in Northwest Iowa, to offer increased recreational, transportation, and social opportunities. Great Places support coincides with other major initiatives in Manning involving the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Drake University and the Iowa Restaurant Association. Manning's proposal will reinforce its unique sense of place while encouraging creativity and highlighting its most historic attractions. Plans call for bronze statues and sculptural elements to be placed throughout the community and the creation of a new park around the historic Milwaukee Trestle Bridge. Additionally, a Park/Hospital trail connector will improve pedestrian access from a regional hospital to the community's historic Main Street, supporting the community's economic development goals. All of the projects are supported by multiple local and regional vision plans and partnerships with Iowa State University and Trees Forever.
- **Comment**
"The Manning community is very grateful for the Iowa Great Places designation and funding. Not only will it help fund three public art projects, two trail segments, and the new trestle park, it will help showcase some of the developments that make Manning one of the great places of Iowa." – Dawn Rohe
- **Contact**
Dawn Rohe, City of Manning, 712-655-2176

Current Iowa Great Place: Hamilton-Webster Counties

Applicant: City of Fort Dodge

Grant Award: \$125,000

- **Project**
Fort Dodge Historic Downtown Gateway Features
- **Project description**
Iowa Great Places funding will contribute to Fort Dodge's renewed efforts to reinvest in its historic downtown core, to serve as a regional and economic hub for a six-county region, and to recognize its heritage through gateways. Recognizing the lack of "livability" in the downtown, the City is redeveloping much of its infrastructure to support the Live, Work, Play vision for its core, which thrived in the 1960s and 1970s. As city leaders move forward with planning efforts for a major recreational center, the Comprehensive Plan process also recently kicked-off, which (among a number of other city-wide topics) will include a review of the existing Downtown Plan to further plan for and support existing and future business and housing in the downtown. Iowa Great Places' support will be leveraged by more than \$200,000 raised by local businesses and philanthropic non-profit groups in support of this project and more for other projects implemented through the downtown plan.
- **Comment**
"The City of Fort Dodge and its surrounding area have faced numerous challenges in recent decades. Through strong leadership, extensive partnering efforts, active volunteerism, and hard work, the greater Fort Dodge area has achieved great strides in overcoming many of those challenges such as job loss, dilapidating infrastructure, and population loss. All of the positive energy stirring within the region is a result of wonderful partnerships, similar to those formed with Iowa Great Places and the State of Iowa. The Iowa Great Places Grant of \$125,000 helps immensely as we continue to improve the livability of our community while recognizing the region's historic and cultural legacy. We thank the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs for recognizing our current and forthcoming accomplishments and for financially supporting our efforts of truly living out the definition of being a "Great Place". – Carissa Miller, City of Fort Dodge
- **Contact**
Carissa Miller, Senior Planner, City of Fort Dodge, 515-576-8191

According to a 2010 Economic Impact Report by O'Brien Economic Consulting, from 2005-2009 the first nine Iowa Great Places designees saw the following outcomes from participation in the program:

- Iowa Great Places grants created 1,012 construction jobs and 707 permanent jobs
- More than \$400 million invested in projects that are currently under construction or completed
- Iowa Great Places grants have been leveraged on an average of 22-to-1 by local communities

Created in 2005, Iowa Great Places now includes 36 Iowa communities. The program is administered by the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. For more information, including Iowa Great Places community profiles, visit www.iowagreatplaces.gov or contact Iowa Great Places Coordinator David Schmitz at david.schmitz2@iowa.gov or 515-242-6195.

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The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs is responsible for developing the state's interest in the areas of the arts, history and other cultural matters with the advice and assistance from its three divisions: the State Historical Society of Iowa; the Iowa Arts Council; and Produce Iowa, the film, television and digital media office that supports media production in Iowa. DCA preserves, researches, interprets and promotes an awareness and understanding of local, state and regional history and stimulates and encourages the study and presentation of the performing and fine arts and public interest and participation in them. It implements tourism-related art and history projects as directed by the General Assembly and designs a comprehensive, statewide, long-range plan with the assistance of the Iowa Arts Council to develop the arts in Iowa. More information about DCA is available at www.culturalaffairs.org.